

BLOOD POISONING

(Septicemia)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Bacterial infection (or toxins from bacteria) in the blood that invade the entire body via the bloodstream.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Shaking chills.
- Rapid temperature rise.
- Rapid, pounding heartbeat.
- Warm, flushed skin.
- Confusion and other symptoms of mental impairment.
- Drop in blood pressure.
- General ill feeling.
- Hyperventilation.

CAUSES

Infection in some other body part, such as appendix, tooth, sinus, pelvis, gallbladder or urinary tract. The sources may also be a burn, infected wound or open abscess.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Adults over 60.
- Newborns and infants.
- Illness, such as diabetes, that has lowered resistance.
- Leukemia or other cancer.
- Use of immunosuppressive drugs or self-administered intravenous drugs.
- Use of a catheter.
- Complicated labor or delivery.
- Certain surgical procedures.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Obtain medical treatment for any infection.
- Influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations for high-risk patients.
- Appropriate catheter care for hospitalized patients.
- If dental procedures have produced blood poisoning in the past or you have diseased heart valves, take antibiotics before any dental treatment including simple prophylaxis by a dentist or hygienist.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Dependent on underlying conditions, patient's health, any delay in treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Shock, with very low blood pressure, overwhelming infection and death.
- Persistent infection of the heart valves.
- Adult respiratory distress syndrome.
- Multi-organ failure (heart, lungs, kidney, liver).



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Hospitalization; intensive care treatment for severe cases.
- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory studies, such as culture of the blood to identify germs responsible for the illness, urinalysis and blood count.
- Removal or drainage of source of infection.
- Mechanical ventilation for respiratory failure.
- Blood transfusions.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics to fight infection.
- Other drugs as required to fight infections.

ACTIVITY

Bed rest during acute illness. Resume your normal activities gradually as symptoms improve.

DIET

During acute illness, intravenous feeding is usually appropriate.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of blood poisoning.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - Reappearance of fever.
 - Signs of infection (swelling, pain, redness) anywhere in your body.
- You plan elective surgery or a dental procedure after you have had an episode of blood poisoning.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.